

Mike DeWine, Governor
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Paolo DeMaria, State Superintendent
DATE: March 8, 2019
SUBJECT: **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A LONG-TERM PROPOSAL FOR DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS**

I am pleased to provide to you the Department's recommendations for a long-term proposal for diploma requirements as required by Section 5 of Sub. H.B. 491 (132nd General Assembly). These recommendations serve as an important step in the ongoing work of developing and implementing a meaningful, challenging and flexible system of graduation requirements for the state. I am thankful for all the individuals and organizations who contributed their experiences and expertise over the last two years to get to this point of the process. These contributions have resulted in recommendations for Ohio's high school graduation requirements that provide students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do in a manner that is less reliant on standardized testing and more encompassing of the variety of ways students can demonstrate their academic, technical and professional skills and knowledge.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT

Section 5 of Sub. H.B. 491 (132nd General Assembly) directed that *"the Department of Education, in consultation with the business community, shall make recommendations, as confirmed by resolution of the State Board of Education, to the General Assembly for revisions to the requirements for a diploma from a public or chartered nonpublic high school under section 3313.618 of the Revised Code. The recommendations shall include a long-term proposal for diploma requirements that reduces reliance on state testing, encourages local innovation, and supports student readiness for a career, college, and life. The recommendations also shall include a transition plan to allow time for implementation of the new requirements."* **The deadline for these recommendations is April 1, 2019.**

CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Two meetings were held to consult with representatives of Ohio's major business associations regarding Ohio's graduation requirements. These meetings enabled business representatives to learn more about the ***Recommendations for a Proposed Approach to High School Graduation Requirements in Ohio***, which was approved by the State Board of Education by resolution at its November 2018 meeting. I provided to representatives of the business community a description of the current graduation pathways, their benefits and challenges, as well as an introduction to the Board-approved proposed approach to long-term graduation requirements, including the principles, themes and tensions that drove the design.

In the course of these discussions, several areas of agreement were identified:

- Students should have options for demonstrating knowledge and skills that are not standardized tests.
- Graduation requirements are an important component of the state's equity agenda.

- Identifying students “not on track” late in middle school or early in high school is important to ensuring students are able to achieve success.
- Deliberate student planning plays an important part in helping students envision their future and what it takes to get there.
- We must continue to emphasize career advising, work-based learning and industry-recognized credentials.

Additionally, meaningful suggestions were made to help strengthen the proposed plan primarily through processes and strategies to assess the quality of implementation. These included:

- Ensure rigor in the use of non-standardized demonstrations of learning.
- Establish parameters for minimum mathematics and English requirements.
- Establish a timeline to ensure the long-term proposal can commence with the Class of 2021.
- Ensure collection of data sufficient to analyze the manner in which various alternatives are being utilized.
- Be careful, relative to the complexity of the approach, to not create a requirement that cannot be successfully implemented.
- Focus attention on identifying early signs of students not on track to graduate and aggressively promote strategies to get students back on track.

The business community also clearly represented that, while the Culminating Student Experience is an attractive opportunity for student learning and demonstration, it should not be part of the graduation requirement system. The business community seriously questioned the ability of the state to implement this part of the proposal with consistency and integrity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are my recommendations for Board action. Ohio’s state-level business associations informed the development of these recommendations; however, **in no way should it be represented that the business community has specifically approved or endorsed these recommendations.**

I recommend the Board adopt the following, which would be **in addition to** the Board’s resolution on Graduation Requirements adopted at the Board’s November 2018 meeting:

QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

To ensure integrity and reduce bias or subjectivity in the process of evaluating non-standardized demonstrations of learning, the Department of Education shall establish appropriate training and quality-control mechanisms as follows:

- **Training:** The Department shall establish a training program for teachers (and others) who will evaluate non-standardized demonstrations of learning. (Such training shall be similar in nature to the training provided for teacher observers as part of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System.) The training shall include activities designed to calibrate teacher scoring based on rubrics through the examination of examples of student work including writing samples, math demonstration samples and presentations. There shall also be online modules that support the training effort.

- **Secondary Peer Scoring:** Coordinated by Educational Service Centers, the Department shall establish protocols and procedures for the second scoring of a random sample of non-standardized demonstrations of learning by qualified peers. This would mean that some demonstrations would be scored a second time by a qualified individual who is not the student's teacher or otherwise associated with the student. Any difference in scores would be resolved by consensus between the two scorers, or by the engagement of a third party.
- **Data-Informed Quality Reviews:** The Department shall establish protocols and procedures for periodic reviews of district or school scoring practices. These reviews may be informed by data relative to the use of non-standardized demonstrations. These reviews shall serve to provide feedback for improvement or require corrective action in cases where significant discrepancies are found. The findings of such reviews shall not impact any previously made determinations by the district to grant a diploma.

MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH EXPECTATIONS

The Department shall develop guidance, rubrics and samples for mathematics and English demonstrations of learning. The level of minimum mathematics and English ability shall be established and reflected in the demonstration samples. There may be multiple ways establish and demonstrate minimum expectations. For example, in mathematics, one way of expressing the minimum expectations may be through a statistical analysis project, and another may be based on a geometry-rich demonstration. For English, one way may be through creative writing and another may be through technical writing.

The guidance and samples shall be reviewed by a panel of advisors consisting of an equal number of subject area high school teachers and business representatives. The business representatives shall have direct experience with the English and mathematics knowledge and skills expected of individuals with only a high school diploma hired by their respective businesses. The business representatives shall also have an understanding of the knowledge and skills required for a student to successfully engage in further learning. That is, are students equipped to learn new mathematical and English skills after high school. The samples of potential student demonstrations may include such artifacts as a business plan, a data analysis project, a research paper, etc.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

The Department shall establish the appropriate coding structure within the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to identify the manner by which students satisfy the mathematics and English requirements under the long-term proposal. Training shall be provided to EMIS professionals as to the appropriate use of the codes, and controls shall be established that do not allow such codes to be left blank. Such codes shall be developed in such a way as to allow for the analysis of high school and district use of standardized tests, GPA, demonstrations of learning or other Board-approved approaches consistent with the previously Board-adopted resolution. This recommendation is limited to mathematics and English because those are the areas for which there is greatest concern about the level of rigor of the requirements.

STRONGLY ENCOURAGE WORK-BASED LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS

In developing the guidance for non-standardized demonstrations and the anchor experience for the Culminating Student Experience, the Department shall encourage a student's participation in work-

based learning and the earning of industry credentials. This encouragement may be accomplished by providing illustrative examples of work-based learning experiences of sufficient quality and duration so that a student following the particular example has an opportunity to demonstrate sufficient English and mathematics skills and abilities as well as leadership and reasoning skills and social-emotional learning.

EARLY WARNING AND INTERVENTION

Ohio should focus on the early identification of students who may not be on track to graduate on time. Also, the state should collaborate with educators to identify those strategies that are most effective in helping students master the knowledge and skills needed for future success. Current state law requires districts to identify and support students at risk of dropping out of school through the development of a student success plan and career advising. This should be expanded to identify specific intervention strategies that provide students targeted supports in the development of mathematics and English language arts skills and knowledge. An Early Warning and Intervention Protocol can focus on early identification of struggling students as they transition from middle school to high school, identify strategies to address English and mathematics learning needs and address students' academic and career pathway to graduation and the role of career-technical education, competency-based education and experiential learning. The Department can and should build on prior school and district experience and the experiences of other states in developing the Early Warning and Intervention Protocol and supporting best practices.

TRANSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Attached as Appendix A is a proposed timeline for the implementation of the long-term proposal. The timeline is sufficient to meet the requirement for initial implementation of the long-term proposal for the Class of 2021. However, the Culminating Student Experience for the Class of 2021 would be a "lite" version, since the training requirements related to appropriate scoring could not be completed effectively. Consequently, school districts would have more flexibility for the Class of 2021 with regard to the scoring of non-standardized demonstrations. The Class of 2022 would be subject to a more diligent scoring process based on more training and other quality assurance mechanisms (as described above). It is important to note that the original Superintendent's Advisory Committee recommended the proposed changes take place with an incoming cohort of students starting their freshman year. The State Board, through previous resolution indicated support for implementing new requirements for the class of 2022.

CONCLUSION

I am excited by these recommendations and for the opportunities that the proposed graduation requirements will provide to students and educators. I fully believe that they meet the requirements of Section 5 of Sub. H.B. 491 and the requirement that the proposal *"reduces reliance on state testing, encourages local innovation, and supports student readiness for a career, college, and life."* The long-term proposal is anchored in *Each Child, Our Future*, Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education, specifically aligning to and supporting the priorities outlined in Strategy 10. By implementing these recommendations, we will ensure each child is *challenged, prepared, and empowered* to pursue his or her chosen post-high school path.

APPENDIX A: TRANSITION PLAN AND TIMELINE

OVERVIEW

In November 2018, the State Board of Education passed a resolution recommending a *Proposed Approach to High School Graduation* to the Ohio General Assembly. The resolution indicated that the new graduation requirements will apply to the graduating class of 2022. Subsequent legislation directed the Ohio Department of Education (the Department) to make recommendations, in consultation with the business community and confirmed by the State Board of Education, that include a long-term proposal for diploma requirements that reduce reliance on state testing, encourage local innovation and support student readiness for a career, college and life. This document sets forth a transition plan that includes recommendations tied to an implementation timeline.

The original *Superintendent's Advisory Committee for High School Graduation Requirements* recommended that changes to graduation requirements should begin with an incoming cohort of high school freshmen to offer certainty to Ohio's students and families. However, the November 2018 State Board resolution indicated the new graduation requirements will apply for the class of 2022 and beyond. Further feedback from state-level business associations indicated a preference to apply the graduation requirements to the class of 2021.

The proposed timeline below is sufficient to meet the requirement for initial implementation of the long-term proposal for the Class of 2021. However, the Culminating Student Experience for the Class of 2021 would be a "lite" version, as the training requirements related to appropriate scoring could not be completed effectively. Consequently, school districts would have more flexibility for the Class of 2021 with regard to the scoring of non-standardized demonstrations. The Class of 2022 would be subject to a more diligent scoring process based on more training and other quality assurance mechanisms outlined in the Superintendent's memorandum to the State Board of Education dated March 7, 2019.

ISSUING CLEAR GUIDANCE

To ensure consistent and effective implementation of the graduation requirements, the Department must be ready to issue clear rules, guidance, tools and supports that address each component of the plan. Following are key areas where the Department will provide specific guidance to students, schools, districts, parents and families:

- Developing guides for schools and districts that communicate and clarify graduation requirements for the Classes of 2021 and beyond.
- Issuing similar clarifying materials for students, parents and families.
- Identifying and approving, by action of the State Board of Education, additional assessment options and required scores for each component of the requirements (i.e. GPA, WorkKeys, ASVAB, Accuplacer, ALEKS etc.).
- Developing the Culminating Student Experience criteria, evaluation process and rubrics for the evaluation of mathematics and English language arts demonstrations and student presentations.
- Developing quality assurance mechanisms and processes.
- Creating state online English and mathematics courses as appropriate.
- Developing training and professional learning opportunities for administrators, school counselors and teachers.
- Developing specifications for data reporting requirements and systems.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Following is a timeline for advancing the work.

Phase 1: Planning and Development

From the date of legislative adoption to June 30, 2020

- The State Board adopts the technical guidance and policies that will guide changes in graduation requirements (*pending legislation*).
- The Department develops and communicates technical guidance and policies for all changes in graduation requirements; this includes producing appropriate materials for schools, districts, students and families.
- If necessary, the Department proposes draft policies to the State Board for determining additional assessment options for graduation requirements for the Classes of 2021 and beyond. Additional assessment options could include GPA, ASVAB, WorkKeys, Accuplacer, ALEKS, etc.
- The Department convenes a panel of advisors to develop guidance, rubrics and samples for the Culminating Student Experience. This panel includes an equal number of subject area high school teachers and business representatives.
- The Department develops and releases guidance and rubrics for scoring English language arts and mathematics demonstrations for the Culminating Student Experience.
- The Department identifies the level of mathematics and English reflected in WebXams.
- The Department issues an RFP to develop rubrics and quality assurance mechanisms that support the Culminating Student Experience. The RFP will request:
 - A rubric design that identifies the components of a successful Culminating Student Experience based on individual student needs, including the mathematics, English and technology demonstrations.
 - A plan for training and calibrating student demonstration evaluators.
- The Department establishes a process to identify school districts that will pilot the Culminating Student Experience for the Class of 2021.
- The department initiates the process to develop the Early Warning and Intervention Protocol.

Phase 2: Initial Implementation

July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021

- The Department supports school districts with implementation of the Proposed Graduation Requirements.
- The Department establishes a training program for teachers who will evaluate student demonstrations of learning for the Culminating Student Experience.
 - The training includes activities designed to calibrate teacher scoring based on rubrics by examining examples of student work.
- The Department establishes protocols and procedures for second scoring of a random sample of student demonstrations of learning by qualified peers.
- The Department establishes feedback mechanisms to monitor the success of implementation and receive comments that will inform future iterations.
- The Department coordinates with Educational Service Centers (ESCs) to provide trainings to student demonstration evaluators.
- The Department engages ESCs to establish and communicate protocols and procedures for periodic reviews of district or school scoring practices.
- The Department establishes the appropriate coding structure within the Education Management Information System (EMIS).
- The Department provides training to EMIS professionals regarding new data reporting requirements.

- The Department develops an online mathematics course and an online English language arts course (Draft and issue RFP and select vendor(s)).
- The Department completes the development of the Early Warning and Intervention Protocol.

Phase 3: Full Implementation

July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022

- The department monitors all aspects of implementation and makes adjustments and course corrections as needed.

Phase 4: On-Going Activity and Improvement

Ongoing

- The Department, in coordination with ESCs and professional organizations, develops a plan for ongoing professional development of educators and administrators that provides evidence of successful models for implementation.
- The Department continues to engage educators, administrators, representatives of the business community and higher education professionals to receive feedback and input on continuing implementation.
- The Department conducts periodic reviews of district or school scoring practices.